

Youth Pastoral Document No.3

RESOURCE MATERIAL AND GUIDELINES FOR A SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PLAN

DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH PASTORAL WORK-ROME

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SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL AND
PASTORAL PLAN**

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1. FOREWORD

1.1 During the scholastic year 1978-79 Salesians were asked to study the SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PLAN. The Department for the Youth Apostolate played its part by holding courses for animators and by compiling "Aid I", dated December 1978. That was a necessary step for promoting awareness and for providing motivation in regard to the Plan. It was indispensable that each community should:

- * understand the meaning of the deliberation made by GC21 concerning the plan;
- * perceive its usefulness;
- * become aware of its responsibility to draw up a Plan;
- * adopt an attitude of interest and initiative in respect of the Plan;
- * have some suggestions for its elaboration.

1.2 The aim of this second Aid is to help weave the various elements of the plan into one organic whole.

To this end, the Aid comprises:

an introduction which defines the Salesian mission and the reason for a Plan which is both educational and pastoral;

a first part in which the FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS of the Educational and Pastoral Plan are set out:

- * the educational and pastoral
- * goals the Salesian educational method,
- * the areas where we want to concentrate our efforts;

a second part in which the five areas are presented one by one:

- * the educational and pastoral community;
- * the dimension of education and culture;
- * the dimension of evangelization and catechesis;
- * vocational guidance;
- * group experience.

1.3 In each of these areas

- * we recall some of the authoritative guidelines given by SGC and GC21;
- * we lay down some specific collectives;
- * we try to set down some criteria that can help us reach the objectives and put the guidelines into practice; this is why the criteria are preceded by a glance at the situation;
- * finally, we list some lines of action that would seem fundamental to us.

1.4 We have tried to keep a proper balance between the overall idea and its practical realization; two dimensions which are difficult to combine in a document meant for diverse cultural situations. Each Provincial community will have to find a way of rendering the elements of the Plan still more concrete in its own situation.

In the meanwhile, this Aid will serve:

- * to organize the building materials for the Plan;
- * to give an idea of the areas highlighted in the Plan. "To foster unity within decentralization, the Department for the Youth Apostolate, in the light of Salesian experience and self-evaluation, will draw up the broad outlines of this master Plan (objectives, content, method, characteristics...) with due regard to the diversity of geographical and cultural situations"(GC21 105).

1.5 While the work goes on in the local communities, the Province should gather together common elements and ideas and, in this way, prepare its Provincial Plan.

The Plan should comprise:

- * a more general outline applicable to all the works of the province; and
- * a specific presentation for each kind of work (schools, youth centres, parishes, etc.).

1.6 Experience has shown us that to be able to draft the Provincial Plan, the following steps are useful:

- a) collect the Plans drawn up by the local communities and individual sectors (schools, youth centres, parishes, etc.) even though they may be unfinished;
 - b) synthesize, set in order and look over the various contributions in order to get an accurate idea of both the situation confronting each sector and the lines of action that seem more urgent and possible;
 - c) assess the findings in the light of the guidelines given by the SGC and GC21; this work can be done by calling together confreres who work in the different sectors;
 - d) lay down common objectives and lines of action for all the Salesian works throughout the province (a general outline);
 - e) draw up the parts concerning each sector (schools, youth centres, parishes and other works), in the light of the options made in the general outline.
- 1.7 During this year we have had the opportunity to read and examine several drafts sent to us with the title: "Educational Plan". Though this expression is coming to be adopted everywhere, it runs the risk of being used with different or generic meanings, and therefore not serving any more to convey a precise idea.

For this reason, we feel we must clarify the meaning of three words that denote different degrees of concreteness, viz. Frame of reference, Plan, and Programming.

a) Frame of reference

This is a complex of orientations of an ideal nature concerning aims and methods, the concept of man and of education. These orientations have no explicit reference to their application or implementation in concrete circumstances. They constitute instead, a kind of declaration of principles, a philosophy of education. The frame of reference takes the form of a brief and "stable" document, valid for the long term and applicable to an entire cultural situation. In some countries it serves to define a particular institution and its activities in the eyes of the State and of other educational bodies.

The elements of this frame of reference:

- * are to be found in GC21, especially in Chapters 3 & 4 of the Document on the Evangelization of the Young;
- * can be drawn up as a separate synthesis or incorporated in the Plan as "guidelines ". In any case, their comment can be rearranged and eventually reformulated so as to bring it within the grasp of co-workers, parents and pupils
- * are of great value in spreading the "ideas" underlying the Plan and in getting them assimilated, even if they lack practical suggestions for putting them into practice.

b) Plan

This is a general scheme of action that brings our educational vision down to brass-tacks. In this sense the Plan:

- * sets practical objectives, suitable for the needs and demands of a particular locality or area;
- * suggests concrete lines of action and means to attain these objectives;
- * establishes roles and functions to make sure that the lines of action are implemented and the objectives attained.

An Educational Plan is much more concrete than a frame of reference. Its range of application is neither long-term nor short-term, but lies somewhere in between; and it concerns itself with the local situation of a province or a community. The goals or aims it proposes, the areas of action it indicates and the lines of action it chooses - all delineate a clearly-defined path for an educative community to follow.

c) Programming

This means deciding on personnel, times, places and tasks called for by the Plan, and determining on the spot activities to be carried out.

Programming needs to be done every year, and is based on the Educational Plan which in turn draws its inspiration from the frame of reference.

- 1.8 Perhaps it may be useful to recall the "clarifying communication and operational role" of the Educational and Pastoral Plan on both the provincial and local levels.

By means of the Plan, it becomes possible to:

- * define the line we are going to follow in our work of education amidst the welter of possible courses of action offered by the environment;
- * create in the educative community an awareness of the
- * common mission and of the need for unity of criteria for action;
- * tailor the steps we take according to the situation
- * bring the various roles and activities to converge on certain chosen objectives so as to avoid dispersing our energies and to ensure a united educational strategy.

All this foregoing implies that the Plan is a mental and community exercise even before it is put down on paper.

1.9 We have noticed that in Educational Plans and in their preparation at both provincial and local levels, widely differing situations have had to be considered. There have been nevertheless significant points of convergence, and we have also made use of them in the preparation of this Aid.

1.10 In the meanwhile, the Department is carrying out the following programme so as to help the provinces in their work and collate their practical findings:

- * a first Aid, to launch the theme and motivate communities by suggesting to them an action plan (December 1978);
- * this second Aid, setting down the fundamental outlines (GC21 105) of an Educational and Pastoral Plan (October 1979);
- * a study of how to apply the outlines of the Plan to the various settings of evangelization (schools, parishes, youth centres, etc.) (starting from November 1979);
- * a seminar of experts on some concrete problems and aspects of the Plan (June 1980).

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 THE SALESIAN MISSION is a sharing in that of the Church, which brings about the saving design of God, THE COMING OF HIS KINGDOM (Const. 31).

This sharing takes place in line with the Salesian vocation and for a specific purpose, viz. so that Salesians, with their particular style of presence and action, may be signs and bearers of God's love to the young, especially to the poor among them (GC21, 87; Const. 2).

- 2.2 Typical of the SALESIAN ACTIVITY among the young, is its incarnation in the field of education and culture, and the constant apostolic aim of its pedagogy (cf. AGC, 4.1).

We evangelize by educating and educate by evangelizing.

- 2.3 This educating and evangelizing mission becomes a reality when it is lived out in an EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PLAN that is relevant to the present-day youth situation and is inspired by a renewed study and practice of Don Bosco's experience.

- 2.4 The FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS of this Salesian Educational and Pastoral Plan today arise from a reflection which has taken place in the whole Congregation; having been approved by the competent authorities, they are a guarantee of fidelity to the original inspiration of Don Bosco.

The aspects presented in this Aid, therefore, constitute a common point of reference for drawing up the Plan.

3. THE FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE PLAN

"We become specialists in taking the Gospel to the young" (GC21, Presentation)

3.1 THE GOAL OF THE SALESIAN PLAN:

THE INTEGRAL HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG ("good Christians and upright citizens": MB XII, 618).

3.1.1 The goal of our Salesian activity is both humanistic and Christian. As GC21 says: "A Truly religious and Christian course of action is developed in the Salesian Educational and Pastoral Plan, in continuity with the commitment to develop and promote the more specifically human values" (GC21, 91).

"The two lines of action do not in themselves follow one another chronologically, and still less are they divergent; they bear on two essential aspects of man's unique vocation as outlined in God's plan" (ib.)

The heart of the Salesian Plan then, is the human person in the totality of his various dimensions and the unity of his living dynamism.

3.1.2 We Salesians today, like Don Bosco, draw inspiration for ourselves from the "Da mihi animas". The ultimate end of all our activity is to imbue people with a religious outlook, even if each of our actions, taken singly, has its own value and significance.

Thus, our final aim comprises various aspects, and these are established in a hierarchy leading up to "growth in Christ within the Church" (ib.)

And so, we wish to build up a unity of the person, which is based on FAITH as its vital principle and unifying inspiration

3.1.3 We strive for human and Christian development at two levels (cf. SGC, 77):

- * at the personal level, by our concern for young people as individuals (cf. GC21, 101,108);
- * at the level of the environment, by our striving to better the social situation in which the youngsters live (collective development, the

commitment to build a society more worthy of man's dignity, the quest for justice and peace etc. (cf. Const. 33; SGC, 67-77).

3.2 THE SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL METHOD

3.2.1 The principle of "prevention"

- * Our method is that of promoting the growth of persons by directing all their resources towards positive experiences of the good, so as to forestall harmful experiences.
- * We prepare youngsters for their future anticipating the deeper needs of later years, by developing in them attitudes that will enable them to cope successfully with risks and situations.
- * For this purpose, we help them to understand the meaning of their youthful years and to live their lives to the full with all their aspirations, energies and impulses.

3.2.2 An educational setting

We strive to create an "educational setting" and constantly improve it, for we see in it a means to instil values in the young. The setting is a balanced ensemble of many different elements, each of them necessary for a proper functioning of the whole.

Characteristic elements of the setting are:

- * family spirit: relationships between persons are marked by simplicity and serenity; and kindness is the binding force of the educative community;
- * a happy atmosphere, a feeling of joy and optimism that arises from the Christian view of life and youth's psychological instincts; creativity and spontaneity: artistic, recreational, cultural, social and religious activities are not unrelated to the substance of education and evangelization (cf. GC21, 98); Don Bosco used all of them most effectively in his educational work;
- * reasonableness and flexibility: our activities and plans are in line with the requirements and possibilities of the young;
- * daily work, individual and social responsibilities and the requirements of discipline: they are all carried out in a spirit of loving kindness.

3.2.3 A personal educational rapport

Our service of education is not just a matter of "mass activities" but it recognizes the "unique" character and "individual" history of each young person. Friendship and trust inspire this rapport (cf. GC21, 124, 131), as well as an understanding of the world of the young and an ability to welcome them and dialogue with them (GC21, 101).

3.2.4 "reason, religion and loving kindness"

In our educational work, we appeal to those vital powers of human reason, love and desire for God which every youngster has in the depths of his being (Const. 38). Indeed, reason, religion and loving kindness sum up Don Bosco's experience and characterize the altitudes and conduct of those who take their inspiration from him.

3.2.5 An animating presence among the young

These three traits (setting, personal rapport and appeal to inner forces) are achieved by a presence among the young, of educators who enter into their lives, enliven their activities, help them towards maturity, forestall negative experiences (cf. GC21, 96) and always direct them towards the religious meaning of their lives. ·

3.3 PRIORITY AREAS AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES

3.3.1 Having clarified the goal and the method of our educational work, and with a view to creating a convergence in a practical way out of our manifold educational and pastoral activities, we now point out to the following as our priority areas and general objectives.

3.3.2 In the area of COMMUNITY: To form a community of persons who have as their unifying element, love for the young and our educative and pastoral mission (the educative and pastoral community).

3.3.3 In the area of EDUCATION & CULTURE

To begin and carry through a process of education that frees the creative potential of a person and enables him to involve himself in the world of culture and society with a critical sense of judgement.

3.3.4 In the area of EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

To plan out a programme of education to the faith, abounding in ideas, to be presented to the youngsters in a climate of freedom and wholesome pedagogy (GC21, 132).

3.3.5 In the area of VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE:

To offer a service that guides and accompanies young people in discovering and embarking on their own life-plan.

3.3.6 In the area of GROUP EXPERIENCE:

To promote group experiences and to help them become experiences of responsible and committed Christian communities.

4. THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

"To form a community of persons who have as their unifying element a love for the young and our educative and pastoral mission (the educative and pastoral community).

4.1 GUIDELINES

4.1.1 Forming an educative and pastoral community

In all our works (oratories, youth centres, schools, parishes, etc.) we aim to bring about the educative and pastoral community (cf. Const. 47; GC21, 126/1.5.3, 132, 138, 140a).

This is for us:

- * a living experience of the "Church": we live and work as a communion of persons, united in dialogue and shared responsibility (cf. Const. 47, GC21, 46);
- * a decisive element in evangelization (cf. GC21,65): our collaboration and our sharing in the spirit of the Gospel are, of their very nature, a WITNESS and an effective form of PROCLAMATION (cf. GC21, 62);
- * a necessary condition for our educative and pastoral action, which has a community structure (cf. GC21, 63,67). In fact, it is through unity among ourselves and joint brotherly responsibility that we achieve our educational and pastoral objectives (cf. Const. 44).
- * a hall - mark of the Preventive System
 - which requires an intense and bright environment of participation and of sincere friendly and brotherly relations (cf. GC21, 102);
 - which brings together in single dynamic experience both educators (as individuals and community) and pupils (cf. GC21, 96).

4.1.2 The members of the educative and pastoral community

Those who form an integral part of the educative community or are associated with it are:

- * the Salesian community, as its central animating nucleus;

- * the Salesian Co-operators and those past-pupils who have chosen to be evangelizers and to take part in a concrete project (cf. GC21, 76, 62, 67 ab, 72, 69);
- * lay collaborators: teachers, the animators of various sectors and activities and administrative personnel;
- * the parents of the youngsters, for they are the first ones responsible for their education;
- * the youngsters: like Don Bosco, the Salesian sees his educational and evangelizing mission not only among and/or youth, but also with them and through them (cf. GC21, 96).

4.1.3 The role of the educative and pastoral community

"It is the duty of the whole educative and pastoral community to make sure that the distinctive characteristics of Christian education do actually flourish in its midst." Upon the religious community falls the task of general animation and the particular role of keeping alive the Salesian identity of the educative community (cf. GC21 68).

4.1.4 The special place of the young in the educative and pastoral community

"The educative community is first and foremost the community of the young, animated by their educators" (AGC290, 5.1).

For this reason, we set up a permanent presence in their world, like Jesus Christ who "pitched his tent. in our midst", and we give them the possibility of living their "world" also within our works (cf. SGC, 363).

4.1.5 The educative and pastoral community in society and in the Church

The community draws into its educational and pastoral work the social forces existing in its environment and in the particular with that of youth and education.

4.3.3 However we envisage an educative community in the process of growth and development and offering possibilities for collaboration at various levels.

For this reason:

- * we make sure that we have clear ideas about our Plan; about its inspiration, structure and coherence and about the influence it should

have on our programming in the various sectors and activities of education;

- * we strive for the full collaboration of all those who share the same Christian and pastoral aims of the educative community. This leads us to choose collaborators preferably from the Salesian Family and from those who can incorporate themselves easily in our apostolic programme, especially if they have some experience in the youth field;
- * we also try to integrate into the educative community those who are not of our faith but who respect the distinctive spirit of our work, and adhere to the educational and human values that the Salesian method demands;

4.3.4 The educative and pastoral community is geared towards the young; in it the young find room for their own initiatives and groups (cf. GC21, 131).

This principle implies that we:

- * plan activities and set up structures having in mind "real live youngsters" and their "actual condition";
- * meet their requirements, their actual interests and their future responsibilities in life.

4.3.5 The educative and pastoral community is also ready to learn: it sees itself in a continual state of ongoing formation and genuine renewal.

Such a formation and renewal cover the areas of

- * professionalism (problems of pedagogy and culture),
- * the Christian life and
- * the Salesian charism.

4.3.6 The educative and pastoral community is geared towards the young; in it the young find room for their own initiatives and groups (cf. GC21, 131).

This principle implies that we:

- * plan activities and set up structures having in mind "real live youngsters" and their "actual condition";

- * meet their requirements, their actual interests and their future responsibilities in life.

4.4 LINES OF ACTION (2)

4.4.1 The growth and development of the educative community

To develop new and different relationships among the members of the educative community, we will have to do the following:

- * inspire and intensify an awareness of the common mission.
- * Recognise the co-responsibility of all those who participate in the Educational Plan of a particular Salesian work;
- * encourage everyone to cooperate according to his/her ability and competence;
- * create ways and means of engendering greater participation;
- * imbue all activities and manifestations with a "family" atmosphere;
- * deepen personal relationships and hold meetings for an exchange of ideas and experiences;
- * attend constantly to the formation of the members (cf. GC21 62, 65, 67, 76, 78, 103, 126/1.5.1, 132, 138, 140, 572/4.2c).

4.4.2 The animating role of the Salesians

The duty which the religious community has of being the animator (cf. GC21, 63) demands.

- * The continual updating of the Salesians in both the fields of evangelisation and education.
- * the reserving for the Salesians themselves the key posts that will enable them to carry out their work of animation, e.g. management and pastoral roles and positions where one can have a considerable impact in education;
- * a programme of activities and initiatives explicitly directed to the ends mentioned above (in 4.4.1).

In the local Plan these lines of action will be spelt out in the form of activities, initiatives, goals and contents chosen and responsibilities assumed according to those for whom we work, our educational programme and the availability of our co-workers.

4.4.3 The young

We will have to organize the youth community in sections or groups, according to age and educational level, so that the young people can get to know, love and help each other in practical ways, deepen their understanding of the faith and come to realize the urgent need there is of announcing the Gospel to all the brethren (cf. SGC, 418).

4.4.4 Parents

Parental involvement will be encouraged through a programme of activities, communication and meetings, in order to help foster among the young a Christian experience of the "domestic church" and integrate it with the work of education (cf. SGC, 356).

4.4.5 Structures and participation

Besides the competence that is asked of the Salesian community, the educators and teachers, the parents and other lay collaborators, in order to assist in the elaboration, execution and evaluation of the Plan, the educative and pastoral community will:

set up requisite bodies for coordination and decision making, according to the different works (youth centre, parish, school etc.);

organize in a suitable manner representative bodies (and eventually associations) of young people, of parents, of co-workers and animators, of educators and teachers etc.

5. THE DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

"To begin and carry through a process of education that frees the creative potential of a person and so enables him to involve himself in the world of culture and society with a critical sense of judgement"

GUIDELINES

5.1.1 Integral development

"Genuine development takes place within a Plan that aims at the total development of man and at the integral growth of individuals and of groups (GC21, 81).

This "total development of man" refers to his:

- * personal growth, and
- * social growth understood as:
 - a relationship with other people,
 - a critical and active involvement in the sphere of culture,
 - a commitment to the collective advancement of society through his work/profession (cf. GC21, 90).

5.1.2. The components of integral development

Our service of education is designed to meet the needs of the young, and comprises:

- * supplying what may be lacking in family care or material needs;
- * making good the harm caused by lack of affection or by social injustice;
- * imparting knowledge and culture that will enable one to interpret the meaning of life correctly;
- * training for competence in a profession;
- * promoting physical and psychological development by means of recreational and creative activities (1)

(1) There are only general pointers. Obviously, each component will receive greater or lesser emphasis according to the type of apostolate we are engaged in: schools, youth centres, parishes etc

5.1.3 The centrality of the person

In this human advancement of the person in society, our action as educators will consist in:

- * helping the young to assume responsibility for their own lives, for their own formation and common advancement;
- * helping them to concentrate their advancement not so much on things as on acquiring a personal and social awareness, a responsible and creative freedom, a capacity for relationships and participation, and an ability to work out life-plans for themselves that are oriented to the service of others.

5.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

5.2.1. The goal of our work of education is to help develop the person (cf. EC, 8), i.e. "to work together with our young people to bring all their talents and aptitudes to full maturity" (Const. 32).

We strive to develop the kind of person who can face reality in himself, in others and in society with the help of:

- * a solid heritage of genuine principles, a clear sightedness of reality and of its demands;
- * an active and discerning attitude towards life and events;
- * an ability to make decisions and serve others (cf. Const. 32).

5.2.2 To aid personal growth we aim at developing a UNITY OF THE

PERSON by helping the youngster build a sound and balanced humanity (cf. GC21, 90).

To this end we foster:

- * good solid principles;
- * a carefree and positive rapport with persons and things that reduces conflict and tension
- * an education in sex and in love that will make him capable of giving and encounter;
- * a gradual maturing in freedom, in the ability to make proper decisions, in the assuming of his own responsibility, and in creativity;

- * a planning of his future in order to liberate and direct towards a precise vocational choice the immense potential hidden in him;

5.2.3 With respect to social growth we aim at assisting the young to have a heart and mind open to the world and to the needs of others (cf. GC21, 90).

This means:

- * giving them a sense of dialogue and solidarity;
- * making them part of the community through group experiences and the acceptance of responsibilities;
- * leading them gradually to a Christian commitment to justice and to the building of a more just and human society.

5.3 CRITERIA

5.3.1 The youth situation in which we carry out our work of education shows the following traits:

- * In the more advanced and complex societies, there is a lengthening of the period of adolescence, because of a longer training to acquire specific skills and also because of the problem of finding a job and fulfilling one's political responsibilities.
- * Because of their massive force, culture content and total language, the means of social communication make for a rapid diffusion of judgements, analysis and principles, presenting at the same time contradictory models and values.
- * The forces of education, such as the family, the school and the youth centre, find it difficult in their task of formation to break down cultural ghettos, unify the many different stimuli and offer the young a sure set of values.
- * Because of the interaction of contradictory 'values and messages, it is far from easy to project the right way of living together (democracy), of exercising responsible freedom and of getting down to the bottom of every problem.
- * Indeed, all about us we see growing phenomena such as:
 - a resignation to situations which seem incurable;

- the consequent "withdrawing into one's shell" which finds expression in consumerism, superficiality and shying away from responsibility;
- "escape" through drugs and even senseless acts of violence and rebellion in order to give vent to feelings of deep frustration

* But everywhere there are new and sincere desires to get involved more in the social, and at times religious fields than in the political field; there is also a reshaping of ideological positions, a search for the meaning of things and a desire for a better quality of life.

5.3.2 In this situation and in view of our objectives, we adopt the following principles in our work of education:

a) We aim at individuals and persons

Our service of education is shaped according to the abilities and healthy inclinations of individuals. Keeping the ideal at the back of our minds, we adjust ourselves according to the unique life and history of each young person. We have greater recourse to his inner vital forces than to external conditionings.

b) We proceed by means of educative experiences

We aim at giving the youngsters a chance to develop their own culture and become mature persons by means of an active contact with real life and the good things culture has to offer them. We stimulate youngsters to exercise their intelligence in discovering and spelling out clearly the meaning of their experiences and their truths (cf. CS, 27).

c) We educate by working with others

we teach and educate in such a manner as to bring about real collaboration and a fruitful social experience; create an ability and willingness to work and mix with others, and the capacity for critical judgement and action.

d) We promote a unity of educative action and of the person.

We bring about a convergence of all our educative activities by directing them towards a clear-cut goal. And in this way we hope to form in the young a personality that is unitary in that the various

aspects blend with and strengthen each other, and harmonious in that the various dimensions and aspirations are organized in a certain hierarchy according to their true worth.

5.4 LINES OF ACTION

See that our charges are surrounded by an educative environment that bespeaks warm welcome, serenity, vitality and dedication; such an environment will help to communicate values and develop the right attitudes.

- * prepare a well - organized and multi - faceted programme of activities to meet the needs of the youth of the area;
- * provide opportunities to learn, to express oneself and to make contacts with others, so that the youngsters:
 - widen and enrich their understanding;
 - are able to form an exact and objective idea of themselves;
- * Provide opportunities for the young to undertake initiatives both as individuals and in groups, thus training their freedom by its gradual exercise and by their active involvement in organizing their own lives (cf. Const. 38).
- * Encourage participation in group work and the acceptance of personal responsibility.
- * organize a service of assistance that reaches the individual and his needs, such as counselling, animation of groups, etc.
- * Make certain demands of young people who have tasks to perform, and so train them to a sense of personal and social responsibility.
- * Develop the social aspect:
 - by putting forward the Christian viewpoint on the dignity of man and his rights and duties; on the "common good" and its practical demands in the family, in the educational institution, in groups and movements, in society, and in the local and universal Church;
 - by promoting experiences of sharing and of working to improve social conditions;
 - by instructing the young in the mechanism of change so that they themselves are able to bring it about.

6. THE DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

To plan out a programme of education to the faith, abounding in ideas, to be presented to the youngsters in a climate of freedom and wholesome pedagogy (cf. GC21, 132)

6.1 GUIDELINES

6.1.1 Evangelization as a goal

To evangelize (1) the young is the first and fundamental goal of our mission; it is this goal and its practical consequences that give a distinctive character to our works, communities, personnel and activities (cf. GC21, 9, 140, 164).

"The extent to which a community evangelizes will be the measure of its being Salesian" (GC21, 32). "Our every activity, in community or personal, is justified only if it is aimed, organized and carried out in view of the evangelization of the young" (GC21, 120).

6.1.2 Faith and education

Our Plan is radically open and positively oriented towards bringing the young to full maturity in Christ (cf. GC21, 91; Const. 31) and growth within the Church (cf. GC21, 91). At the centre of their whole personal development stands spiritual formation (cf. GC21, 115). We accompany their human growth and are as leaven to it when we point the way to conversion and Christian maturity (cf. GC21, 95, 101, 111, 131; Puebla 955).

6.1.3 The priority of catechesis

We give priority to catechesis not according to the order of time but in the order of values. It explicitly proclaims and witnesses to Christ and His mystery of redemption.

By "evangelization" we mean a proclaiming of and a witnessing to the Gospel on the part of the Church through what she says and is. By "catechesis" (which is a form of evangelization) we mean an education in the faith to its full maturity.

Catechesis goes hand in hand with initiation to the liturgy and the sacraments (cf. GC21, 93) and personal and community commitment (cf. GC21, 65, 102; Cons t. 34; SGC, 365; Puebla, 805).

6.1.4 Plurality and freedom

In order to educate to the faith, our Plan offers an abundance of initiatives in a climate of freedom (cf. GC21, 132).

It is of fundamental importance for us, members of a Salesian educative community, that the integral Christian message be set before our youngsters in all "frankness, even if adapted to differences in age, in cultural and spiritual level, in ability to listen and accept" (GC21, 101). We do not force the pace (cf. GC21, 310); but neither do we allow "the times of grace and salvation to pass by in vain" (GC21, 83).

We encourage, offer ways and means, emphasize the necessity and the beauty of the religious message, and act in such a way that young people are persuaded willingly and spontaneously and not compelled by force that is our attitude and our approach.

6.1.5 Sacramental life and devotion to Mary

Sacramental liturgy (especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation) is one of the pillars of our educative action (cf. SGC, 64, 257, 424; GC21, 9, 32, 92, 120, 140; AGC, 290 4.3).

Because of the God experience it communicates, it constitutes a "peak - moment" of our Salesian educational and pastoral strategy, for:

- * it is a locus and sign of God's action;
- * it is an expression and witness of the faith-community;
- * and
- * it has profound educational value, especially in the case of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

When fostering devoting to Mary, the Immaculate One and the Help of Christians, we present Our Lady:

- * as a "maternal and mediating presence" in the past and present history of the people of God;
- * as the "model" of Christian life (cf. GC21, 94) and of holiness (Immaculate), as the sign of victory over sin, and also as the model of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries (cf. MC 35, 21).
- * as our "help" in the daily struggles of life (cf. GC21, 94), for she gives us courage for the service of our brethren (cf. Const. 92).

6.1.6 Faith leading to commitment

"Today more than ever before we must help the young to rediscover the value of prayer in dedicated living" (SGC, 372). The liturgy must transform our youth groups into "true Christian communities, dedicated to real, integral service to the most needy" (SGC, 373).

The devotion to Mary, too, should lead to action: it should bring us to dedicate ourselves to serve the people of God (SGC, 105c) and not degenerate into "a vain credulity which substitutes reliance on merely external practices for serious commitment" (MC, 38).

6.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Evangelization aims at

- * creating and developing a conscious and active faith;
- * achieving a more profound knowledge and a complete experience of the message of salvation (cf. GC21, 95);
- * incorporating the faithful into the Christian community and its mission as discerning and active members.

In terms of the young, the above goals come to be spelt out in the following ways:

- a) helping the young to see the creditability of our faith, so that they will turn to Christ. In other words: bringing them to listen to the call of the FAITH as the " Good News" in their lives, and to be convinced of the value of being Christians;
- b) getting them to have a living experience of the faith so that they may grow in Christ. In other words: offering them the possibility of a personal and community Christian experience - an experience of

meeting Christ in his various forms of presence (Word, sacraments, the Church and an experience of a life of communion and service among men.)

6.3 CRITERIA

6.3.1 The SITUATION in which our evangelizing Plan develops is marked by the following traits, which, together with the guidelines, have a bearing on our lines of action:

- * The environment and the persons among whom we work are often only slightly or not at all evangelized, even if already initiated to the sacramental life (cf. GC21, 95). A great number of people, especially the young, live in a de-Christianised environment, even in countries with a long - standing Christian tradition (cf. SGC, 38; GC21, 82, 146/4.2.1).
- * Secular interpretations of the meaning of life are legion and through the media their message has a greater and more immediate impact than the "religious" message or example. Oftentimes, the Gospel seems to have no say in the forming of collective judgements. Such secular messages, then, if not properly corrected lead to a very real rupture between the Gospel and culture in the lives of the young.
- * Norman Christianity: Side by side with a generic liking and even adherence to the name of "Christian", one can find concepts of life that are incompatible with the Gospel and axiomatic and moral judgements that are far removed from any Christian interpretation.
- * Lack of genuine faith: As they grow up, many young people become openly "critical of the Church, and dissatisfied with the actual practice and religious experience they find in the ecclesial community" (GC21, 28). They stand in need, therefore, at every stage of their growth, of renewing their first global option for the faith, also because frequently "they have not really given a personal adherence to the message of revelation" (DCG, 18).
- * Encouraging signs: however, even today, young people do manifest an openness to the faith: they show a readiness to

search, a reawakening to inner values, a sensitivity about justice in the world and about the purity and radicality of the Gospel teachings (cf. GC21, 28).

* Search for God: "In each and every one of these young people one can detect the need for truth, for freedom and human growth and the desire (often no more than implicit) of a deeper knowledge of the mystery of God " (GC21, 12; cf. Sign. Cat. 1).

* Vocations: There is in every youngster some point that is accessible to good (cf. MB V, 237), an implicit solidarity with the Gospel, and an openness to the value it propounds. In not a few of them we notice a greater sensitivity and spiritual richness and several of them show signs of a call by God to be consecrated persons as priests or religious or to be committed lay Christians.

6.3.2 In this situation we seek to achieve our objectives by following these principles:

a) We take the initiative in proclaiming the Gospel and explaining how it is a "personal" call to everyone.

As evangelizers we go to the young, engaging in a work of "missionary searching" (SGC, 361, 362). We work for them all, no matter what their situation may be regarding the faith.

Thus, we become mediators of the message to each person singly (cf. GC21, 110).

We begin with each one at the stage his faith has reached and we accompany his development with the help of an ITINERARY, considering how he can live the Christian message at every stage of his life (childhood, adolescence, youth etc.).

b) We proclaim the Gospel more by what we are and do than by what we say (cf. SGC, 416).

For us evangelization is not only catechesis or only liturgy (cf. AGC, 290/4.2); it is carried out by word and teaching; and also, by action, attitudes, the environment and moments that set the pace of existence (cf. GC21 102).

Hence, we take care of "the pastoral orientation in our task of education" (GC21, 120), and "we direct our educational and pastoral efforts toward s evangelization" (GC21, 120, 91; Cons t. 33).

- c) We maintain the unity and essential relationship between the word that is pro claimed (catechesis), the word that is celebrated (liturgy), and the word that is lived (groups and communities) (Syn. Cat. 11).

Our action is at one and the same time:

- a proclamation that leads to the faith, assists its growth and strengthens its commitment;
- a commitment that is produced by an encounter with Christ in the sacraments and in tum produces attitudes leading to an acceptance of the proclamation;
- a celebration which is the presence of Christ with us, a proclamation of his word and a public sign of Christian commitment.

- d) In our evangelization and catechesis is we emphasize conversion or re-conversion.

The young have to make the faith they have received their very own; their "family faith" must become their personal option. Hence, the greater part of our "word" is a call to conversion; it is not just a first stage that is completed once and for all, but rather a permanent requirement lasting throughout the period of their personal formation.

- e) We conduct a catechesis that is systematic, well organized and of the catechumenal type

God offers a person at every stage of his life the full possibility of living in faith, hope and charily, that is, in holiness. Every stage of life therefore needs a systematic deepening of the faith.

- f) We proclaim the Word of God starting from within man himself

A renewed apostolate of evangelization and catechesis seeks in every way to become part of the concrete realities of everyday; it endeavours to "illumine man's existence with the light of the Gospel, not side by side with or in consequence of, but from within, human problems" (SGC 290).

g) We catechize through the action of authentic Christian communities (cf. SGC, 318 - 321).

Evangelization will always be for us an ecclesial action. We take as our point of departure a community, which strongly feels the need of being evangelized and also evangelizes, stirs up, inspires and sustains diverse forms of collaboration (cf. GC21, 31).

We move ahead "in communion with our Pastors" (EN 60) and "following the directives and programmes of the local Church" (GC21, 85).

6.4 LINES OF ACTION

6.4.1 Experiencing God's Word

To experience God's Word becomes for the young, as it is for ourselves, an urgent and particular need.

Hence, we offer them the Word in its twofold dimension:

- Evangelization, so that it stimulates and accompanies a process of conversion or re-conversion.
By means of the explicit announcement of Christ and his mystery, we help the young to ponder the questions of their existence, origin and destination, the very meaning of their lives - these are the problems which form the core of the yearning for God (cf. SGC, 32).
- Catechesis as "an orderly and gradual education and maturing in the faith" (Syn. Cat. 1) for all those who wish to walk the path of total liberation.

*** Suggestions

In keeping with the situation and the religious attitudes of the young, we consider some of the following initiatives to be important:

- The work of education itself when carried out in such a way as to predispose the young to the faith. By helping them to be open to values, by developing in them those attitudes which are basic to being a New Man, and by encouraging them to make an experience of living the kind of life that is consonant

with the Gospel (cf. SGC, 63,9; Const. 33), we prepare the ground for an act of faith.

- an occasional missionary proclamation, in answer to questions arising out of a common search and an in-depth reflection on the values of human experience.
- A regular missionary proclamation, with due respect for every one's freedom, by making use of: peak moments of the liturgical year (such as Advent, Lent, preparing for a feast, etc.) activities organized for this purpose (such as conferences, recollection days, retreats, etc.).

The central point of our proclamation must be Jesus Christ true God and true man, and his redeeming life, death and resurrection (cf. Syn. Cat. 7; SGC, 301-306). We have to present the essential truths as an event, possessing a fundamental meaning for faith, a challenge and a call. (2)

- The teaching of religion which makes a synthesis of faith and culture possible and offers the young a total Christian understanding of man, history and the world. (The best place for this teaching: the class room).
- A systematic catechesis as a process of initiation to living in Christ (Syn. Cal. 8). (The best place for this catechesis: the ecclesial communities).
- A liturgical and sacramental catechesis which we offer as a catechumenal way of introducing persons to the sacramental life of the adult community. (This is best done as an initiation to the first sacraments, as a preparation for confirmation, marriage, etc.)

(2) This first meeting with Christ present in His Word - a meeting which requires man's free and responsible acceptance - is absolutely necessary for those young people who are not yet believers, those who have lost faith or those who have not yet come to make a personal act of faith in the revealed message (cf. DCG 18.) Educators should therefore know how to make this meeting with Christ possible again and again in a suitable manner at every stage of a person's development.

- An in-depth catechesis, which goes hand in hand with the dedicated life of a community. (This form of catechesis is most appropriately carried out in groups, small ecclesial communities, youth groups and movements, enquiry groups etc.)

6.4.2 Experiencing the encounter with Christ and the presence of Mary in the midst of God's people:

- * in personal and community prayer;
- * in celebrations, especially those of the liturgical year;
- * and above all, in the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation (cf. GC21, 93; Const. 36; SGC, 532).

By this experience we seek to:

- * celebrate the joy of God's presence and of the Christian life;
- * develop an attitude of sincerity in our relations with Him;
- * live a real communion in the Church through an active and conscious participation in the liturgy;
- * enter upon an inner attitude to, and the practice of, prayer;
- * grow in an understanding of the characteristic elements of Christian prayer (silence, contemplation, listening, prayers...);
- * educate to a reading of Christian "signs" and a grasp of their meaning and value;
- * build up a knowledge, admiration and love for Mary as the one who believed and who helps Christians in their pilgrimage through life (cf. Const. 34)

In a word, we try, like Mary, to make our life a worship of God and our worship of God, a life-commitment.

*** Suggestions

a) Activities:

In our Plan we offer the possibility of:

- * periodic celebrations according to the level of development of the faith of our young people;

- * times for prayer and celebration, open to everyone, on the more significant occasions in the life of the community, such as:
 - the principal feasts of the liturgical year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost)
 - Marian and Salesian feasts;
 - important events for the educative and pastoral community;
 - anniversaries and important days;
- * liturgical services and sacramental celebrations for small groups, geared to the life of young people;
- * intense times for prayer and celebration (e.g. spiritual retreats, live-ins, days of recollection, etc)
- * moments during the day that can help us live close to God and bring His Word to illumine our work.

b)and their modalities:

- * with the accent on joy, community, simplicity and popular appeal: We use forms of piety that have a strong youth slant and arc marked by a spontaneous adherence to actual life (cf. SGC, 546); we place an emphasis on joy, simplicity and the participation of people (cf. GC21, 93, 85; SGC, 423-424);
- * in conjunction with the process of education and evangelization: Liturgical and non-liturgical celebrations and the sacraments, and particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation, must be placed within the framework of a Christian plan of life. The continuity between life and liturgy is a fundamental principle.

This requires:

- that celebrations be not isolated events, but be situated against the background of educational efforts to instil human values;
- that they be held at the most significant moments in the life of the youth community, as an expression of a daily life lived in the joy of salvation;

- that they be motivated by a suitable catechesis and prepared by means of celebrations catering to particular aspects.

6.4.3 Experiencing the Church and its various aspects

We see in the Church - the people of God - the unifying and animating centre of all the forces which work for the salvation of the world (cf. Const. 13).

And so, we choose to present it as:

- * a Church-community seeking to reconcile persons and nations with God and among themselves;
- * a servant Church dedicated to the liberation of one and all through its ministries and charisms;
- * a missionary Church, announcing with joy to modern man that he is a son of God in Christ (cf. Puebla, 1064);

Through this experience we mean to:

- * help the young discover and love the Church as a sign of God's presence, as a place for a Christian experience' and as a community of all those who follow Christ;
- * develop their sense of belonging as active members of the ecclesial community;
- * stir up attitudes of faith and love towards those in the Church who are bond of charity and the visible centres of unity, and in the first place, the Pope.

*** Suggestions

- * Bring the young to live their Christian commitment through:
 - participation in community manifestation of faith, especially the Eucharist;
 - relationships inspired by Gospel values and the law of love;
 - personal involvement in the Church's apostolic activities;
- * Impart information about events in the Church and its activity in the world, so as to help the young to understand the

actuality of its saving mission and its contribution to basic human values.

- * Attain objectives with the help of living experiences in ecclesial groups and movements.

7. VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

To offer a service that guides and accompanies young people in discovering and embarking on to their own life-plan.

7.1 GUIDELINES

7.1.1 Person and vocation

- * The centre of our plan of education and evangelization is the person as an individual, and our aim is to help him realize his own life-plan.
- * Hence, vocational guidance will always be present as an essential dimension of our educational and pastoral activity (cf. GC21, 92, 106). The discovery of one's personal call and the free and generous choice of a programme of life constitute the crowning goal of any process of human and Christian growth (cf. GC2 l, 106.)

7.1.2 Methods of vocational guidance

- * Vocational guidance is a personal, explicit and systematic activity; it consists of a constant help in our ministry of evangelization to discern the personal call God addresses to each youngster (cf. GC2 l, 106)
- * We respect the spiritual nature of a vocation and are well aware that it reveals itself throughout one's life, within the unique situations of one's personal and social history (cf. GC21, 112).
- * At every stage, therefore, we assist the young to form their personality and life according to authentic values, taking their inspiration from the Gospel (cf. GC21, 106, 110, 111).
- * To achieve all this, we make use of the ordinary means of education and catechesis, by giving them a suitable thrust in their contents and experiences; we also employ explicit guidance activities and utilize certain times of serious spiritual concentration (cf. GC21, 116)
- * We expose our young people also to the most challenging vocations, and we lead each one to a true knowledge of himself and of the human and ecclesial situation of the community in the light of faith (cf. GC21, 113).
- * With the aid of suitable activities and structures we follow up the vocational development of all young people who show signs of a call

to a life of consecration, and the various ministries in the Church (cf. GC21, 111).

7.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

In the area of vocational guidance, we have the following goals in view:

- * to help each young person face his future in a spirit of openness and generosity;
- * to help him see his 'life as a mission and a responsibility;
- * to assist him to formulate his own life-plan as a response to the needs of his fellow-men and following the "signs" indicating the Lord's call;
- * to nurture in a special manner apostolic vocation within the Church (lay, priestly and religious);
- * to offer special help and opportunities for experiencing a vocation to the Salesian Family (cf. GC21, 111).

7.3 CRITERIA

7.3.1 The SITUATION of young people with regard to planning future Christian life commitments and discerning God's call through signs and human mediations, is marked by the following characteristics:

- * We live in a pluralistic culture undergoing transformation; the quantity and disparity of its messages, together with its mechanism of exploitation, make it difficult to receive a frame of values necessary for the choice of one's career in life (cf. GC21, 25, 27).
- * There is a lack of constant and meaningful models with which the young can identify themselves in a practical way; this prevents them from giving consideration to certain human and ecclesial vocations, which perhaps they do acknowledge as valid on an ideal level.
- * The young see about them certain ways of life that vaunt radical ideologies, a shying away from responsibility and a lack of spirituality; these arc no help to all for developing in them attitude that can lead them to choose a serious Christian commitment in life.
- * On the other hand, many young people are attracted by the radicality and purity of the call of the Gospel; they show interest in the inner values of prayer, contemplation and the Word of God; they manifest a sensitivity and generosity in the face of human problems. All these

encouraging signs are a spur for educators to tackle anew the practical ways and means of furthering a Christian vocation commitment in the young GC21, 28).

7.3.2 Faced with this situation, we adopt the following principles in pursuing our objectives:

- * We start with ourselves as educators and with the educative community, knowing that the good example of the Salesians,
- * Co-operators and co-workers and the image projected by the educative community, will provide the best means for helping the young to make a generous and conscious commitment of their lives (cf. GC21, 112).
- * We make vocational guidance and all our initiatives of vocation promotion form part of the overall plan of human
- * motivations and growth in the faith towards which all our educational efforts are directed (cf. GC21, 16, 574).
- * We see to it that our vocational guidance is not generic; we make it reach each youngster in his individuality, tailoring our approach to his particular inner experience, his situation, and the just requirements of the community (cf. GC21, 110, 116).
- * We try to get others who share our educational responsibilities and especially the families - to interest themselves in the duty of vocational guidance and we work in close collaboration with the local Church (cf. GC21, 118, 119)

7.4 LINES OF ACTION

There are two phases in the "explicit and systematic" vocational guidance we offer the young:

- a) During the phase of openness to various vocations this is the case of children and pre-adolescents - our service consists of a general orientation. We do it by:
- developing an understanding of oneself, of the world and of the Church;
 - cultivating an attitude of openness to all vocations in the Church (cf. GC21, 113);

- deepening one's spiritual formation which is the very centre of the whole development of the person (cf. GC21, 115);
- giving chances for the exercise of responsibility and Christian commitment (cf. GC21, 115);
- providing useful information about various vocations, through meetings, talks, practical experiences, etc.;
- proposing outstanding persons as examples to be imitated.

b) During the phase in which a youngster begins to concentrate on one of the many life's options before him and tries to test it - this is the phase of adolescence and youth - our service consists in providing help and enlightenment to enable him to check it thoroughly.

This means:

- giving him a chance for an experiential knowledge of the practical life-choices towards which he is veering;
- extending a personal invitation to him to follow the Gospel calling (just as Jesus did with the Apostles) (cf. GC21, 113);
- Introducing him to communities of vocational referral, such as: vocation clubs, groups and Salesian communities which can help him acquire a clearer idea of his vocation. In this way we ensure and guide his process of vocational growth, reflection and verification (cf. GC21 118).

7.4.2 To carry out what has been suggested above, it seems necessary to sensitize and train the members of the educative community for this work of vocational guidance just as we do in the case of education and evangelization/catechesis (cf. GC21, 114, 119).

7.4.3 In terms of functions and roles, there will be within the educative community a special team to keep alive the dimension of Christian vocational guidance in every planning and activity. The members of this team should represent various callings. The ordinary career guidance service will have to fit in with this wider plan of Christian vocational orientation.

7.4.4 We intend to choose some ordinary and extraordinary activities to set before the young: what we have proposed above by way of objectives and lines of action.

In order to know what to choose, it would be useful to re-read the relevant document of GC 21, especially nos. 114-118.

8. THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

To promote group experiences and to help them become experiences of responsible and committed Christian communities.

8.1 GUIDELINES

8.1.1 We look upon groups as:

- * a response to the needs of the young for communication, meeting, discussion and fellowship; ·
- * an opportunity for exchanging ideas and values propounded by others or by the members of the group themselves;
- * an experience containing its own specific values;
- * a bridge between the individual youngster and the large educative community;
- * a challenge to assume some human and Christian commitment;
- * a unifying experience of our educational aims, activities and plans;
- * a special place for an experience of Church;
- * a setting and a means to promote ecclesial vocations.

Hence, we Salesian educators choose as our methodology to set up groups among our youngsters, especially when they include character and apostolic formation (cf. GC21, 126, 132; Reg. 8, 15).

We therefore educate in and by means of groups (I).

(I) To have an idea of the guidelines issued by GC21 with regard to groups and movements, one should take up the dossier put out by the Department for the Youth Apostolate in July 1979

8.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (2)

8.2.1 Through the group experience, we aim at

developing a deep understanding of the value of the other person and of the community as a texture of interpersonal relationships (cf. GC21, 90);

- * helping a person to grow with an openness to participate actively and giving him a mature awareness of his responsibility in collective action;
- * initiating him to a commitment in the civil and ecclesial community (cf. GC 21, 102);
- * personalizing and deepening his growth in the faith, according to his individual capacity by means of communication processes;
- * strengthening his experience of the Church as communion and service;
- * facilitating a vocational choice, and shedding light on it by means of group fellowship, dedication and reflection on the Word of God.

8.2.2 PARTICULAR OBJECTIVES FOR GROUPS OF DIFFERENT AGES

a) In pre-adolescent and adolescent groups, according to their ages, our aims are:

- To bring each youngster to live an intense experience of sharing and meeting with others, so as to come out of his shell and feel at home in the company of others;
- to channel into a constructive fellowship the natural need a youngster has for meeting, being together, conversing and playing;
- to create attitudes that dispose him for mutual understanding, good strong friendships and generous self-giving;

(2) Since the group experience is a unifying experience, there are "educational" and "catechetical" factors present in it, as has been previously explained in this Aid. The particular aims of each group are related to the "needs" and "situations" of the group members and to the reasons for forming the group in the first place.

- to work out some project for the group together to serve as an experience of collaboration;
- to initiate each youngster to undertake some service to the community, and in a special way, some apostolic work for the ecclesial community.

b) In older groups of youngsters, according to their level of maturity, our aims are;

- * to create a habit of understanding and of confronting his own views of life;
- * to train each young person to give expression to his inner sentiments and to join with others in a serious and patient search for the truth;
- * to bring him to participate in the life of the community by making some specific contribution of his own;
- * to help him seek out his proper role in society and in the Church;
- * to lead him to render some useful service in the locality;
- * to give him clear ideas about the meaning and impact of cultural, social and political problems, and so to help him arrive at an adequate appreciation of the uniqueness of the Christian message;
- * to develop in him a solid Christian personality and a spirituality based on balanced and well-integrated Christian principles.

8.3 CRITERIA

8.3.1 The situation

- * The desire for solidarity, co-responsibility and participation on the part of young people needs to be channelled in positive ways (cf. GC21, 23, 28, 85).
- * Problems such as a crisis of the sense of belonging, a drift towards anonymity, and a dissatisfaction with actual religious experience (cf. GC21, 18) call for initiatives that help each one in a personal way to understand the elements of the faith and also offer him Christian experience of the kind a youngster likes.
- * The sincere willingness of the young to face problems and seek solutions, their marked propensity towards personal communication and dialogue (cf. GC21, 28), their re-awakening to spiritual values and

to the need for action to improve the world (cf. *ibid.*) require that on our part, we be able to offer them ways and means of turning these attitudes into constructive forces for building up their personal maturity.

- * A profound and wide revision of traditional culture has had an eroding effect on the development of genuine values (cf. GC21, 25); similarly, the communication gap between communities and the young and the new vision of the world and of man - all these call for new approaches and new methods of reflection that are based on voluntary participation and break through the masses to reach the individual.

8.3.2 In this situation, we choose the following criteria:

- a) Group experience is of prime importance in education and should therefore be offered to all young people in our institutions and pastoral presences; it will have to be tailored of course with the help of various programme contents and initiatives to suit their different ages, levels of growth and interests.

The goal, however, remains the same, viz. the integral human and Christian maturity of all the group members.

- b) The groups are to be run by the young people themselves. Don Bosco used to say, "Treat the sodalities as belonging to the boys: you must animate them but not direct them" (confidential recommendations to Rectors).

This means in practice:

- beginning from the actual situations and aspirations of the youngsters themselves;
- keeping pace with their natural growth and development possibilities;
- helping them to reflect on their aspirations and motives; and so, to understand their deeper meaning with the aid of what the Gospel and we convey to them.
- making good use of the qualities and contributions of each one for the good of the whole group;
- animating groups through the leaders whom they produce.

- c) What the group is concerned with is the very life of the youngster, his searching's, his questions about the meaning of things and events and the activity he proposes in order to insert himself in the human and ecclesial community and to make his first contact with real problems, discovering in the bargain his own needs and talents.
- d) The animator has a clear-cut and indispensable role to play. Naturally, it varies according to the actual circumstances and the type of group; but his activity normally follows these lines;
- encouraging the formation of groups and their progress in their search, their activities and their ideals;
 - helping the groups with the help of his competence and experience, to weather the storms that may arise in the group and to get on well with the others on a "personal basis";
 - choosing at the right moment to join with young people in seeking new lines of reflection and new activities;
 - offering young people elements for discernment and depth so that they might be able to appraise their own suggestions, desires and quests;
 - encourage openness and communication between groups;
 - giving "pastoral" help to individual members of the group in their more personal needs;
 - training the group members constantly to see their problems and suggestions in the light of Christ.
- e) The youth group is a form of introduction to the wider community; it is not something segregated, therefore, or isolated from adults; but rather a way to communicate with them in the educative and/or Christian community.
- Hence, we give every encouragement to:
 - communication and liaison between groups and their animators;
 - their participation and voice in the various bodies of the educative community;
 - parental interests in the boys' group experience;
 - participation of adults in the groups for an enriching exchange of ideas.

8.4 LINES OF ACTION

8.4.1 With regard to the educational institution.

- * We make good use of spontaneous groups and groups arising within institutions, such as schools, catechetical groups, etc.
- * We divide the youth community into "free groups"; but the community remains the centre for self-expression, convergence and communication among the groups;
- * We offer groups to the young according to age and specific needs; the different groups however, are linked together by gradual training programmes extending from early to late teens.
- * We give the youngsters a choice of groups with various centres of interest: some cultural, some recreational and some explicitly formative in the Christian faith and apostolic; it is also possible for the young to take up membership in other organizations.
- * In all the different kinds of groups we have constantly before us our Salesian educational and pastoral aims, with due respect however for the situations and levels of the participants. We give the young people therefore, the opportunity of a deeper understanding of the Gospel message and of human problems by means of educational, catechetical and community initiatives.
- * We take a particular interest in Christian apostolic groups; we do not consider them as an alternative to the other groups, but as the crowning achievement of the group experience.
- * We foster in a very special way the forming of groups that share in the spirit and mission of the Salesian Congregation; we are also open to groups which are linked to all experience of the local or the universal Church.
- * We consider community to be the culminating point of the group process in community the groups share not only their own particular interests, activities and special occasions, but most important of all, the Christian experiences of all the participants.

8.4.2 With regard to roles.

- * We include among the various educational and pastoral roles, the explicit responsibility for promoting and coordinating groups.

- * We seek our animators for our groups and movements from among our own collaborators, and with them we form a "community of animators".
- * We make the best possible use of youth leader and their contribution to the institution and the community.

8.4.3 With regard to programmes.

We propose to keep constantly updating our educators on the whole subject of group experience: its methods, its inner working, its programme contents and the present sensitivity of youngsters.

We intend to work out a programme of formative activities for the young leaders and directors of the groups.

*We offer moments of particular intensity (retreat camps, days of recollection ...) as moments for taking stock and relaunching the Christian vitality of the groups.

We see to the continuity of the group experience by spelling out the fundamental lines of content and educational thrust in a way that keeps pace with the natural growth of young people.

The educative community makes a regular and careful examination of the functioning of the educational effectiveness and the programmes of the youth groups.
